
**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, November 18,
1795, from Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe
Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W.
Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Paris Novr. 18.1795.

Dear Sir

Your favor of the 26 of May did not reach me till lately, owing as I presume to its having been committed to some private hand and by whom it was retained to be deliverd personally till that prospect was abandoned. I was extremely gratified by it as it led me into a society which is very dear to me & often uppermost in my mind. I have indeed much to reproach myself for not having written you and others of our neighbours more frequently, but I have relied much on you not only to excuse me personally but to make my excuse to others by assuring them how little of my time remains from publick & other duties for those with whom by the strong chains of friendship I have a right to take liberties. Before this however you have doubt less recd. mine of June still I am less so than I might have been.

I accept with great pleasure your proposal to forward my establishment on the tract adjoining you in the expectation however that you will give yourself no further trouble in it than by imploying for me a suitable undertaker who will receive from you the plan he is to execute, that you will draw on me for the money to pay him, & make my plantation one of the routs you take when you ride for exercise, at which time you may note how

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far the execution corresponds with the plan. With this view I shall look out for a model to be forwarded you as soon as possible, subjecting it to yr. correction, & give you full power to place my house orchards &c where you please and to draw on me by way of commencement for the sum of 1000 dolrs to be paid where you please 3 months after it is presented. If to be paid without this republick tis probable the draft will be most easily disposed of in Sterg. Money. This sum is all I an answer in the course of the ensuing year calculating always in the possible contingency of a recall & upon which I have always calculated from the moment of my introduction into the Convention, & still calculate depending on the course of events on yr. side of the Atlantick. With this sum a suitable number of hands may be hired & oxen bought to draw the stone, which with you I prefer, put the ground in order &c&c to be in readiness to proceed with greater activity the year following. These hands may plant the trees inclose & sow the

ground in grass which is laid of & destined for the buildings of which however you will best judge observing that Hogg be instructed to give occasional aids with the other hands when necessary. Believe me there is nothing about which I am more anxious than to hear that this plan is commenc'd and rapidly advancing for be assured admitting my own discretion is my only guide much time will not intervene before I am planted there myself. I have mentioned the proposal you are so kind as make me to Mr. Jones, but as tis possible my letter may unfold that item in my private affrs. not to him but to some of my good friends in a neighboring country as my official dispatches have those of a publick nature. I beg of you likewise to communicate it to him as of my wishes on that aspect.

I have written LaMotte & directed him to draw on me for what you owe him & have his answer saying he has drawn for 3 or 400# but yet his bill is not presented. I likewise think him an honest man and deserving more than a mere official attention. I found him on my arrival in arrestation not because he had committed any positive crime because the whole commercial class had drawn upon it & often not without cause, the suspicion of being unfriendly to the revolution, & which in his instance was increased by the circumstance of his having married an Engh. woman. He was however shortly afterwards set at liberty &

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since he has exercised his counsellar functions. I will also procure you the books & other articles mentioned but shall not forward them till the spring for the reason you mention. I will likewise seek out those of yr friends who have survived the storm, remind them of yr. inquiry after their welfare & apprize you of the result. A terrible storm indeed it has been & great its havoc especially among those of a certain sphere of life, but still I doubt not I shall find many who have survived it among yr. friends.

I rejoice to hear that Short is to be our neighbour. By his last letter I am to expect him here in a week or two & with Mr. Pinckney the latter having as I presume adjusted the affr. of the Miss. & the boundaries. I suspect the relief of Mrs. Rochft. forms the attraction. If the Carters will take me for their paymaster for what lands they have for sale & fix a price which you approve I will most willingly purchase the whole. I have western lands in possession of Mr. Jones for a part of which only he has been offered 2000.

Pensylva. currency & which I shod. be happy to vest near me: an idea equally applicable to the case of Collé.

You have I presume seen the new constitution & will I doubt not concur with me that altho defective when tested by those principles which the light of our hemisphere has furnished, yet it is infinitely superior to any thing ever seen before on this side of the Atlantick. The division of the legislature into two branches, one to consist of 500 & the other of half that number, will secure always in both due attention to the interest of the mass of the people, with adequate wisdom in each for all the subjects that may occur; the mode of election too & the frequency of it in both branches seems to render it impossible that the Executive shod. ever gain such an influence in the legislature as by combination corruption, or otherwise, to introduce a system whereby to endanger the publick liberty: whilst on the other hand the Executive by its numbers & permanence one of 5 yielding his place to a successor annually only, seems in regard to this theatre, where the danger is always great & suspicion of course always at the height, well calculated to united energy & system in its measures with the publick confidence at the same time that it furnishes

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within itself a substantial guarantee in favor of the publick liberty. The judiciary too is better organized than heretofore. About 10 days past the constitution was completely installed in all its branches & since each has been in the exercise of its respective functions. The effect which the change has produced is great indeed. The council of antients occupies the hall lately held by the Convention, & the contrast which a tranquil body, in whose presence no person is allowed to wear his hat, or speak loud, a body who have little to do, & who discuss that little with temper & manners, is so great when compared with the scene often exhibited by its predecessor, that the spectators look on with amazement & pleasure. The other day a demand was made by the directory on the 500 for a sum of money & which was immediately granted & the bill in consequence sent to the 250 who upon examination discovered there was no appropriation of it & for that reason rejected the bill. The Directoire then accomodated iits demand to the article in the

constitution as did likewise the council of 500 & whereupon the other council passed the bill. I mention this circumstance to shew change in legislative proceedings whereby calm deliberation has succeeded a system which was neither calm nor deliberative. Since the govt. was organized, not more than two or three laws have passed & those of no great importance, and the people go to rest of a night in tranquility consoling themselves with the gratified reflection, that now a strong impedement is opposed to the rage for legislation. They rejoice to find that their legislators have supplied the place of action by reflection under this govt. too the spirit of faction seems to be curbed. Formerly when a member of any note rose and denounced another, it put his life in hazard let his merit or demerit be what it might. But latterly some denunciations were threatn'd in the 500, & to which the parties menac'd rose and demanded that their accusers shod. put in writing the allegations & sign them that they might prepare for & appear in defence, but this silenc'd the others & thus tranquility seems to be established & confidence daily increasing.

The paroxisms which proceeded the first dissolution of the convention & particularly that of the attack upon it, on the 13 of Vendn. or of Octr. you will have heard long before this reaches you. In a few words however I will give you a general idea of it: The change of

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the govt. or transmission of the powers of govt. from one system to the other was a great experiment in the present state of affairs & which could not be made without some danger to the revolution; but yet such was the general solicitude to get rid of the revolutionary system that a refusal to make the experiment woud. likewise be attended with danger. All France seemed to call out for a stable government & this call was finally answer'd by presenting before the nation the constitution in question. But experience had shewn that each succeeding assembly had persecuted the members of the proceeding one, a constituent especially was an object not less attractive of the rage of Robtspre. Than a cividant Bishop or even a Chouan. And reasoning from experience it was to be feared that the deputies of the late convention would be exposed in like manner to the resentment of those who took their places, & this created in them a desire to keep their

places & which was attempted by two decrees whose object was to provide for the restriction of 2/3ds of the legislature of the new govt. from among the members of the convention-according to the principle of the constitution wh. applies hereafter & requires an annual change of 1/3d only, & which decrees were submitted with the country for the sanction of the people. By some of the primary assemblies these decrees were adopted & by others rejected. The convention however reported & in my opinion with truth that the majority was for them & of course that they were obligatory on the Electoral assemblies. This was denied by the opponents to the decrees by whom a systematic effort was made to defeat them, first by newspaper discussion, next by section: arreets which defined the authority of the convention, & finally by assembling in arms in great force to attach that body and which done on the day above mentioned.

I candidly think that this attack upon the convention as it failed was of great utility to the revolution. The system of terror was carried to such a height by Robertspierre & his associates, that in the vibration back which ensued, some danger seemed to threaten not the overthrow of the revolution, but to put it a greater distance than there was otherwise reason to hope its happy termination: for when this vibration had gained its utmost point, it so happened that the govt. was to be transfered into other hands. In this stage too the

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royalists who were formerly persecuted more than was upon any principle justifiable & in whose favor & upon that acct. a general sympathy was excited, & which was of course due to humanity & had no connection with their political principles, had gained an attention which under other circumstances woud. not have been shewn them. The probability therefore is that if the election had come on unaided by that incident more than a majority of that description of people woud. have been thrown into the legislature. But as the attack failed, it produc'd in a great measure the opposit effect for in consequence the decrees were not only strictly executed, but the former censure agnst. the royalists whose views were now completely unmasked, proportionally revived; many of whom and among those some who were candidates for the legislature & with good prospect of success took refuge in the neighbouring countries or the Vendee according as circumstances favored their escape.

On the side of the convention there were 3000 foot & 600 horse of Pichegru's army & abt. 1000 or 1200 of the citizens of Paris (the latter of whom were honored by their opponents with the title of terrorists) and on the opposit side there were perhaps in activity twice that number, whilst the other citizens of Paris were neutral. The battle was short for as soon as the assailants saw that opposition was made their numbers diminished & continued to diminish by battallions, till finally none were left but those who were too marked in their characters to hope for concealment: and which latter party surrendered in a body on the next day at noon to the number of abt. 500. In the contest 4 or 500 on both sides were killed and wounded. It was extremely complained of on the part of the assailants that the convention accepted of the services of the terrorists that it suffered cannon to be used in its defense, since they the assailants had none or but few, & whence they urged that the fight was not a fair one. You will observe that all Paris was agnst. the decrees 2 or 3 sections only excepted & because as many of their own deputies were heretofore cut off they woud. be forc'd to elect their members from among those of the convention who belonged to other departments, & because they did not like to chose even those of them who remained. This being the temper of the city in the commencement the royalists

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took advantage of it first by opposing the decrees & which they did with great address, contending for the unalienable right of suffrage which they said was thereby infringed, & demanding wherefore had the good citizens of France fought & bled so freely & otherwise sufferd so much if they were now to be enslaved a slavery too the more odious because it was imposed by those who had assumed the mask of patriotism? One step led on to another till finally recourse was had to arms.

Before this event I doubted whether foreign powers had much agency in the interior movements & convulsions of this republick, but by it I was satisfied they had, for it was known in Engld. Hamburg & Balse before

it happened that there wou. be a movement here at the time it took place; at which time too the Ct. D'Artois approached the coast from Engld. & between whom and the authors of that movement in Paris & the Vendee there was obviously the utmost harmony of measures. Some thing of the kind is to be trac'd in several preceding events but not so strongly marked at least not to my knowledge as in the present case. Yet the ordeal thro' which France has passed and is passing in the establishment of a republican system is called an experiment of that system, whose convulsions are contrasted with the gloomy & sullen repose of the neighboring despotisms by the enemies of republican govt. to the disadvantage of this latter species of govt. So often does it happen by the decrees of a blind fatality that the authors of crimes not only succeed in exculpating themselves from the reproach they justly merit, but even in fixing the imputation of guilt upon the .

The French were lately checked on the other side of the Rhine & which caused their retreat to the Rhine: but yet they hold the two posts of Manhiem & Dusseldorff on the other side. Tis thought some serious rencounters will take place there soon & wh. may produce a serious affect likewise upon the war with the Emperor and on the continent. The late organization of the directoire by wh. men of real talents & integrity & in the instances of Canot & Barras men of great military talents are plac'd in it, the former of whom planned the last campaign & the latter commanded the National gds. in the great epoch of the 9th

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of Ther. When the tyranny of Roberstpre was broken; and on the last event of the 13th Vendre is well calculated to secure a wise arrangment on the part of France.

In negotiation nothing has been lately done. If any negotiations were depending they were doubtless suspended to wait the issue of the late elections & which ensued in the hope on the

hope on the part of the coalised powers that something wod. turn up from the struggles that were then expected to favor their views. But now that that prospect seems to be

over tis probable they will be commenc'd & peace their early offspring. An event which will be greatly promoted if Pichegru succeeds agnst the Austrians and still more so if his majesty of Engld. is agn. intimidated by the unfriendly greetings of his discontented & afflicted subjects. Unhappy old man, his reign has indeed been a reign of mourning & of sorrow to the world: for we trace upon its several stages in America the East & in Europe no other vestiges but those which are marked by the blood of the innocent who were slaughtered in all those various climes of the world & without regard to age sex or condition. And yet we are told by many that he is a mild, an amiable and pious man, and that the govt. in which he presides, & by means whereof these atrocities were perpetrated is that model of pacification of which, thro' all antiquity, Cicero & Tacitus had alone formed only a faint idea, but with which the world was never blessed before. But you know I must not speak irreverently of dignities & therefore I will add not more on this subject at least for the present.

I hear that the French have just gained a considerable advantage over the Austrians on this side of the Rhine near Manheim. The Austrians crossed the R in its neighborhood to make a diversion there were met by a body of French & defeated & driven back. Other particulars we have not. Mrs. M & our child join in affectionate wishes to yrself & whole family & pray you also to make them to my brother Joseph & all our neighbours & that you will believe me most affectionately yours.

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